



SUCCESS STORY

Community Cleans Irrigation Canal

A community restores their most important source of water



It is sowing time at the Ahal Farm Association near Turkmen capital Ashgabat. Photo: Counterpart

With support from the USAID-funded Community Empowerment program, a farm association revived its land for harvests.

The community of Farm Association “Ahal”, located 45 km to the west of Ashgabat, is known for its tradition of self-organizing and resolving priority issues in collaboration with local self-government. The local authorities, represented by the village archinlik (council), provide technical, organizational, and financial assistance to the association. Joint projects successfully implemented in the past have included restoration of sites considered sacred, landscaping and management of territories, building of a mosque, improvement of streets and tree planting.

Recently, the community implemented another project, funded by the USAID-funded Turkmenistan Community Empowerment Program, and endorsed by archinlik representatives. The villagers designed a community project around their primary need – cleaning of a drainage canal, the condition of which directly affects the village’s agricultural and economic development. The 55 kilometer long drainage canal had not been maintained in a long time, resulting in rise of subsoil waters and decrease in the harvests. After receiving a USAID grant to clean up 15 kilometers of the canal, the community leveraged additional 47,121,000 Turkmen Manat (\$3,315) to clean up another 15 kilometers.

Though the village Farm Association is continuing to work on cleaning the remainder of the drainage canal, the results of initial works followed immediately. In spring of 2008, the number of land lessees increased from 100 to 150 in the association. Together, they planted vegetables and melons on 2,200 hectares instead of planned 1,700 hectares. At least 50 families started building houses on the earlier allotted lands, and the village administration received 500 new applications for land plots for construction of houses along the drainage canal.

The USAID project, implemented in close cooperation between village residents and government, improved a key physical infrastructure, raising the living standard for 11,000 people and creating favorable conditions for local economic development.